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# Millions Sought for Global Fund to Aid Farms

By HELENE COOPER

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration is proposing to add \$408 million to a global fund to boost food production and encourage good farming practices in the developing world, the [Treasury Department](#) announced on Thursday.

The fund, created after the [Group of 20](#) meeting in Pittsburgh last year, will begin with contributions from the governments of Canada (\$230 million), Spain (\$95 million) and South Korea (\$50 million) and from the [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation](#) (\$30 million). It is meant to provide money to poorer countries, particularly in Africa, that invest in local farming programs and agricultural development to increase crop yields, administration officials said.

In an interview, Mr. Gates said he believed that a “renaissance” period of growth and development was under way in many African countries and could be spurred by the infusion of money. “I wouldn’t work on something that was some bleak ‘you should feel guilty so give some money’ type of thing,” he said.

But he acknowledged that the structure of the agriculture aid program — funneling money to governments that demonstrate they are investing wisely in agriculture — could leave farmers in countries with struggling governments out in the cold.

“If I had one wish, it would be for good governance in all of these countries,” Mr. Gates said. He specifically cited the Democratic Republic of Congo, where since 1998 fighting has raged, particularly in the east, and where the prevalence of rape and sexual violence is believed to be among the worst in the world.

The United States has already contributed \$67 million to the fund, and has requested another \$408 million in [President Obama](#)’s fiscal 2011 budget proposal. If approved, the new money would be available when the federal fiscal year starts on Oct. 1, administration

officials said.

“A global economy where more than one billion people suffer from hunger is not a sustainable one,” Treasury Secretary [Timothy Geithner](#) said in a statement. “At a time of limited resources and large global challenges, this fund will leverage support from around the world to achieve lasting progress against hunger and bolster agricultural productivity and growth.” Mr. Geithner and Mr. Gates wrote about the new initiative in an opinion article in *The Wall Street Journal* on Thursday.

But Mr. Gates warned that getting Congress to approve the budget request will require a fight by Mr. Obama, whom he noted had “been to Africa — the speeches he gave were fantastic.” He was referring to Mr. Obama’s visit to Ghana last summer, where the president told a rapt audience that American aid must be matched by African acceptance of responsibility for the continent’s own problems.

After the battles in Washington over the economic stimulus, health insurance reform and, now, [financial regulation](#), Mr. Obama will face some opposition from both Democrats and Republicans over the scale of federal spending. The fund was created as part of \$22 billion in pledges made by world leaders at the [G-8](#) meeting in L’Aquila, Italy, last summer, and finalized at the G-20 meeting in Pittsburgh a few months later.

The funds are meant to be invested to improve land use planning, irrigation and farm machinery, to provide technical help to farmers and to build better roads linking farmers with their markets.

The [World Bank](#) will administer the fund and help choose projects to finance, in conjunction with the African Development Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. [Jeffrey Sachs](#), the [Columbia University](#) economist, said that supporting farm programs in poor countries has been shown to work. He pointed to the example of Malawi, where the government recently doubled the country’s food production by putting in the same sort of agricultural development programs that the global fund is pushing. Mr. Sachs noted that the Group of Eight wealthy nations last year announced that they would like the program funded at \$22 billion.

“It’s of course completely stark that there’s a \$22 billion announcement and less than a \$1 billion capitalization,” he said. But, he added, “I think this is the first step of something very, very important.”

